

Sgt. Major Robert Matthew Mason, Jr., U.S.MC. Ret.
June 21, 1925-May 13, 2013



With two of his sons holding his hands and telling him that it was ok to go, Sergeant Major Robert M. Mason, Jr. passed from this world in the early hours of May 13, 2013 after a short bout with pancreatic cancer. He joins his beloved wife Dorothy Lee (aka Honey Bunch), who predeceased him by eight years.

Robert was born outside of Cincinnati, Ohio on June 21, 1925. He joined the United States Marine Corps in 1943, becoming one of the Montford Pointers, the first group of African Americans to integrate the Marines. He distinguished himself through his military service, serving with pride in World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War, receiving the Purple Heart for injuries sustained in the line of duty. During his thirty-year military career, he achieved the rank of Sergeant Major. Recently, on June 27, 2012, Sergeant Major Mason attended the Congressional Gold Medal Ceremony in honor of the Montford Point Marines, where he and his Band of Brothers received the Congressional Gold Medal, the nation's highest civilian award given by Congress, for "serving with valor during the war, even as they were subjected to discrimination."

Following his retirement from the Marines, Sergeant Major Mason received his A. A. in History from City College of San Francisco, and went on to teach military history and run the ROTC Program at McAteer High School in San Francisco, retiring after ten years of service. Upon his retirement, then-mayor Dianne Feinstein issued a Proclamation stating that June 15, 1984 was "Sgt.-Major Robert M. Mason Day in San Francisco" and thanked him "for his invaluable public services to our City and do wish him every possible success in the years to come."

After retiring from teaching, he became a Deacon at the Union Springs Baptist Church where he engaged youths in after-church Bible discussions. Even after his advancing years prevented him from participating in church activities at the level he felt necessary to be an effective Deacon, Sergeant Major did not let impediments slow him down, and he became an avid and eclectic reader, devouring anything from Jane Austin, James Joyce, Louis L'Amour, Gore Vidal, and W.E.B. Griffin.

He was fond of reminding us all of a quote from Bobby Kennedy that we only pass through this life once, and if there is some kindness that we can bestow, let us do so now as we may never pass this way again. That was his life's philosophy and he lived it every day, bestowing acts of kindness on family, friends, and strangers in equal measure.

Sergeant Major Mason is survived by his sons (Ross, Robert, and Aaron), daughter (Raquel), numerous grandchildren, and great grandchildren. Two of his children (Norris and Valerie) predeceased him.

Celebration of Life will be Saturday May 18, 2013 at 2:00 P.M. at The Bryant Mortuary, 635 Fulton Street, San Francisco, California, 94102. Interment will be Wednesday may 22, 2013 at 11:30 A.M. at Sacramento Valley National Cemetery, Dixon, California.